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Borough of Okehampton.

The Annual Report

of the

Medical Officer of Health

and

Sanitary Officer.

1938.

S. & A. JANES, PRINTERS, OKEHAMPTON.

Public Health Staff:

Medical Officer of Health,
Medical Officer for Maternity and Child Welfare Centre,
School Medical Officer,
E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.B., CH.B., D.P.H., BIRM.

Borough Engineer and Sanitary Officer,
R. ALAN BRUNSKILL, D.P., R.S.I.

Maternity Nurse,
Miss B. HAMMOND,
General Trained and Certified Midwife.

County Council Health Visitor,
Miss E. M. RATA,
State Registered Nurse. Certified Midwife.
Health Visitor's Certificate.

To the Okehampton Borough Council.

Mr. Mayor, Aldermen and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1938.

The general health of the Borough remained good throughout the year. One must again record the lamentable fact of deaths exceeding births, and a further fall in population according to the figures supplied by the Registrar General. It would appear inevitable that unless some active measure is adopted to stem the exodus of young blood from the town certain decadence is at hand.

The town possesses amenities such as pure water, sanitation, parks, pleasure grounds, good housing and the like, to an extent far ahead of most small towns, but without industry, either agricultural or mechanical, they are of no avail in retaining the young adults.

The Town, although giving one the impression by comparison with the heights of Dartmoor on the south of being in a hollow, is in reality well elevated. The lowest point is some 450 feet above the sea, and the higher reaches approach the 1000 feet level. Geologically the main part of the Town lies on an old river bed between the two Ockment rivers. The subsoil consists of river sand and coarse gravel intermixed with granite boulders. This applies also to the site of the Council Houses and the new site for further Council Houses. The higher reaches lie on shale of a very rapidly drying nature. This applies to the remainder of the Town with the exception of Credition Road district where a weak clay mingles with the shale.

The natural amenities of the Borough are varied and interesting, —including the open reaches of Dartmoor on the south,—rapidly flowing rivers, well stocked with fish,—sports and pleasure grounds, offering amusements and exercise for all tastes, and a climate mellow, but at the same time bracing. It is surprising, considering the excellent bill of health, the longevity of the inhabitants, and the central geographical position, that the Town is not more used by convalescents and holiday makers.

General Statistics.

Area (statute acres)—806 acres.

Population, 1931 census—3307.

Estimated population, mid-1937—3562.

Number of inhabited houses—1014, an increase of 9 over the previous year.

Rateable value—£21,773.

Product of Penny Rate—£84.

Vital Statistics.

	Male	Female	Total		England and Wales
Live Births	24	17	41		
Birth rate per 1000 of estimated resident population				11.3	15.1
Still Births, Legitimate			...	4	
Still Birth rate			...	90	60
Deaths—Males 29 Females 23			...	52	
Death rate per 1000 resident population			...	14.6	
Death rate after adjustments			...	12.3	11.6
Deaths from puerperal causes			...	0.0	2.19
Deaths of infants under one year			...	4	
Death rate of infants under one year			...	97.6	53

The 52 deaths recorded of Townspeople during the past year were made up as follows :

Measles	0
Influenza	1
Diarrhœa, under 2 years	0
Tuberculosis of Respiratory system ...	0
Other tuberculosis	1
Cancer	9
Cerebral hæmorrhage	2
Heart disease	14
Other circulatory diseases	0
Bronchitis	3
Pneumonia	5
Other respiratory diseases	1
Diseases of liver	1
Diseases of digestive system	1
Acute and chronic nephritis	2
Puerperal sepsis	0
Congenital debility, prematurity, etc. ...	4
Senility	1
Violence	2
Other defined diseases	5

Ages at which deaths occurred are shown in table below. Apart from an excessive infantile mortality, it will be seen that death occurs mainly in people of advanced age.

DEATH AGE TABLE.

Age.	Under 1 year.	1	5	15	25	35	45	55	65	75
Males	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	7	8	9
Females	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	9	6
Total	4	0	0	0	1	1	5	9	17	15

It will be seen that no death occurred amongst school children.

Section B.

General Provision of Health Services.

(a) Laboratory facilities are supplied by Devon County Council for testing milk samples and analysing water samples. Also for examining bacteriological specimens of infectious cases. Good use was made of this service throughout the year.

(b) AMBULANCE FACILITIES.—An ambulance service is offered by a privately controlled ambulance stationed in Okehampton. The vehicle itself would appear reasonably accessible to all but unfortunately the personnel is unqualified in ambulance work. This is regrettable, as a first-aid class is held in the Town each year and should be utilised by those in charge.

Infectious cases are carried to hospital by the Exeter City fever hospital ambulance. This service is very good.

(c) TREATMENT CENTRES AND CLINICS.—A school clinic is held in the Town once a week, and is well attended by children with minor ailments or who are in need of regular observation. Cases in need of treatment are referred to the practitioner in charge, and others who are merely delicate are referred to the open-air school at Torrington where they derive great benefit.

(d) HOSPITALS: PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY.—The Town possesses a voluntary War Memorial Hospital with accommodation for 19 beds. The staff consists of matron, sisters, 2 staff nurses and 3 probationer nurses.

Other hospitals used are: (1) The Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. (2) The Exeter City Fever Hospital for infectious diseases. (3) The Okehampton Public Assistance Infirmary. (4) Sanatoria for tuberculosis patients are maintained by Devon County Council at Hawkmoor and Barnstaple. (5) The nearest centre for the treatment of venereal disease is Exeter, twenty-three miles away.

(a) Institutional Treatment for Mothers and Children. This service is incomplete and only available in skeleton form at the Public Assistance Institution. A fully equipped hospital is needed to serve the Town and enormous rural area surrounding it.

(b) Health Visitors.—Health visiting is undertaken by a lady appointed by Devon County Council. She undertakes visiting newly-born babies and helping with advice, supervising the home treatment of tuberculous patients, inpection of schoolchiidren, etc., and I cannot but stress the importance of this work in maintaining a decent hygiene in the home, the care of mothers and the well-being of schoolchildren.

(c) Infant Welfare Centre.—The insanitary state and generally undesirable nature of the premises used for the infant welfare centre has been brought to the notice of the Council. In view of the ever increasing popularity of this service it is to be hoped that the welfare authority will within a resonable time take steps to provide more suitable accommodation.

The Hon. Sec. has submitted the following report for the year's working :—

I am glad to be able to report that the attendances at the Centre during the year were as follows :—Mothers 1448, Infants 854, Toddlers 1195. Total 3497. These figures show a very satisfactory increase of 571 over the preceding year.

The Committee have again been very enthusiastic in their endeavours to make the Centre progressively successful, and members have given all possible help in every way under the able guidance of the President, Mrs. T. H. Chamings, M.B.E.

During the year a very enjoyable Outing was held at Teignmouth. The mothers and children, with some of the committee, spent a very happy day.

MABEL A. CORNISH, Hon. Sec.

(d) Orthopædic Treatment.—An Orthopædic Clinic is situate in the Town and draws cases from a radius of about 20 miles. Once a month a consulting orthopædic surgeon visits, and in the intervening weeks a nursing sister carries out instructions as regards treatment. The nursing staff are assisted by V.A.D. ladies. The clinic is run on a voluntary basis, but receives help from the Education Committee as regards schoolchildren.

Section C.

Annual Report of Sanitary Officer, 1938.

His Worship the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Okehampton Borough Council.

Gentlemen,

I have the honour of submitting my Annual Report for the year 1938.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Water Supply.

Sources, Etc.—Sources of supply remain as at the beginning of the century, from Red-a-Ven and Western Park springs. They remained adequate throughout the year, but the reserve margin became very low in midsummer. No augmentation was actually made, but I took all necessary steps to provide a temporary supply from the Camp Water Works at a few days notice, had this become necessary. This should be the last full year that the sources of supply will remain in their present form.

Rainfall.—The year's total rainfall was slightly above the average, but it was unevenly distributed. I thank Councillor S. R. Harry for rainfall figures from which I make the following extracts.

	1938	1937	Average
Cranmere	80.4	84.9	77.5
Newbridge	58.0	60.1	65.3
Uplands	55.3	57.9	56.3

The driest months were March and April, and the wettest January, November and December. Official drought was recorded during April, and the three months average for this period was actually less than the drought summer of 1933.

Distribution and Zoning.—Developments, extensions and improvements have been made during the year. These included new mains in Neville Road, Tuckfields Estate, and 17 new and supplementary connections. Another new development was the introduction of small pressure reducing valves on the service mains in Brandize Park Road, Upper Station Road and Simmons Park and Pleasure Grounds. These have been even more successful than I anticipated in giving a balanced and even supply to these areas, and in maintaining an adequate supply to the elevated area above the railway station which owing to its level had always previously been a source of difficulty.

The zoned distribution system was in operation for its third year working continuously and trouble free, and giving a generally continuous day and night supply to the whole area during the whole period. Pressures were again generally unvarying particularly in the central area. Routine inspections revealed leaks on consumers' pipes for which 38 notices were sent, and 27 were remedied on Corporation pipes, a reduction of 10 on last year.

During very hard frost in December many taps were left running continuously and caused a serious and altogether unnecessary drain on the service reservoir.

Two samples of water were examined during the year and found to be satisfactory.

This, which should be the last complete year prior to the inaugaration of the new Black-a-Ven Intake supply and new pressure filtration plant, has provided again a complete and uninterrupted supply from sources unaltered for forty years, and which for a long time had been considered overloaded and inadequate.

Rivers and Streams.—The two rivers have remained self-cleansing and generally very clean. Two minor trade pollutions were remedied.

Drainage and Sewerage.—Sewerage works have been well maintained, all being periodically inspected and flushed. Heavy rainstorms in August caused slight overloading but no damage. The disposal works were kept in good order and no defects occurred.

Public Cleansing.—Refuse collection and disposal and street cleansing are carried out exclusively by the Corporation direct. Collection is daily in the central area and twice weekly in the outskirts. Disposal is by regulated tipping, and a rat catcher is regularly employed. Progress in the provision of covered bins has included 20 new bins. Additional labour was provided at the tip during the year, and this is being maintained and further increased to secure improved control on the refuse tip.

Sanitary Inspection.—The following are particulars of visits :

Houses	...	25
Houses—*re* housing	...	24
Drainage	...	34
Sewerage	...	18
Water Supply	...	56
Rivers	...	4
Refuse Removal	...	19
Tip	...	14
Tents and Vans	...	2
Schools	...	6
Offensive Trades	...	4
Infectious Diseases	...	1
Miscellaneous	...	12
Informal Notices	...	25
Remedied	...	21

Smoke Abatement.—No complaints have been received and the general standard has been good.

Swimming Pools.—The town swimming pool is just outside the boundary. The supply is from springs. A children's paddling pool in the Pleasure Grounds has a continuous flow of fresh water running through it.

Fish Frying.—Three establishments are all well maintained and conducted.

Offensive Trades.—Two establishments, manure works and marine store, have been well maintained and necessitated no action.

Section D.

Housing.

Re-Housing.—The first scheme of 26 houses at Maceys Terrace, North Road, was completed in 1936, and the six clearance areas it superseded have been cleared.

A second scheme covering five areas and 14 houses was confirmed by the Minister of Health. For re-housing purposes a new site at Bray Hams, North Road, was purchased, and a tender for the erection of 16 additional houses was accepted in the summer. These were put in hand as soon as approval was received. Fourteen of the houses are for re-housing from the clearance areas, and the additional two are for the relief of overcrowding.

New Houses.—The number of new houses erected during the year were as follows :—

By Local Authority	...	16 (in hand).
By Private Enterprise	...	10

The latter is below the average.

Inspection of Dwelling Houses.

1.	(1)	(a)	Number inspected	...	28
		(b)	Inspections	...	36
	(2)		Number recorded	...	16
	(3)		Number dangerous or injurious	...	14
	(4)		Number not reasonably fit	...	10
2.			Number rendered fit by informal action	...	8
3.			Action under Statutory Powers	...	None
		(a)		...	None
		(b)		...	None
	(1)	(c)	Number of houses for which demolition orders were made	...	None
	(2)		Number demolished	...	None
		(d)		...	None

4.		Housing Act, 1935. Overcrowding.		
(a)	(1)	Number of dwellings overcrowded	...	5
	(1)	Number of families therein	...	5
		Number of persons therein	...	45
(b)		New cases	...	None
(c)		Number relieved	...	3
		Number of persons	...	18
(d)			...	None
(e)			...	None

Housing (Rural Workers) Act, 1926.—The completion of six further cottages in Park Row makes a total of eight which have now been reconditioned under this Act, in this Borough. These houses have been so reconstructed as to be generally equal to new houses now being erected, and the large lump sum grant paid by the Devon County Council under the Act enables them to be let at very reasonable rents. More owners of small property should take advantage of the Act.

Section E.

Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk Supply.—Bacteriological Examination under the Devon County Council is regularly carried out. The following are statistical particulars of the samples and results:

	Total		Ordinary Producers		Accredited Producers	
Total Samples	61		38		23	
Number Passed	44	72%	27	71%	17	74%
Number Failed	17	28%	11	29%	6	26%

Both as a whole and in the case of Ordinary samples these results are a distinct improvement on 1937. Fourteen of the seventeen failures occurred in the months of November and December. I continue to issue postcard certificates to both producers and retailers for all samples taken. Inspections were—Dairies 45; Cowsheds 29; and conditions are generally satisfactory.

Bakehouses.—Are kept in good condition, and ten inspections have been made.

Meat and other Foods—Slaughterhouses and meatshops have been well maintained. Transport is satisfactory and all shops have glass fronts.

Disinfection.—Disinfection by formalin fumigation was necesary in two cases only, as follows:

Diphtheria	...	1
Other cases	...	1

In conclusion, I would thank the Mayor and Members of the Corporation, the Town Clerk and the Medical Officer of Health for their co-operation in their respective spheres of service during the year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

R. ALAN BRUNSKILL,

Borough Engineer and
Sanitary Officer.

Section F.

Prevalence of and Control over Infectious and other Diseases.

The only notifiable diseases occurring during the year were diptheria 1, pneumonia 3, and erysipelas 2.

The present arrangement with the Exeter City Council has worked very smoothly both administratively and in regard to the treatment of the patients. The new arrangements prescribed by the County Authority to include the Borough within the area of the North Devon Isolation Hospital Board has nothing to commend it. In fact, from whatever angle the proposal is viewed, it is seen to be to the disadvantage of this authority.

Tuberculosis.—One new case was notified and one death occurred during the year. On December 31st, 1938, six males and fifteen females were suffering from the disease.

Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.

1.—Inspection of Factories, Workshops and Workplaces. Including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances.

Premises (1)	Inspections (2)	Number of Written Notices (3)	Occupiers prosecuted (4)
Factories with mechanical power ...	28	3	
Factories without mechanical power ...	18		
†Other Premises under the Act (including works of building and engineering construction but not including outworkers' premises) ...	2		
†Electrical Stations should be reckoned as factories.	—	—	
Total	48	3	

2.—Defects found in Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.

Particulars (1)	Number of Defects: Found (2)	Remedied (3)	Referred to H.M. Inspector (4)
Want of cleanliness (S.1) ...			
Overcrowding (S.2) ...			
Unreasonable temperature (S.3) ...			
Inadequate ventilation (S.4) ...			
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6) ...			
Sanitary conveniences (S.7) insufficient ...			
Sanitary conveniences (S.7) unsuitable or defective			
Sanitary conveniences (S.7) not separate for sexes			
Other offences ...	3	3	
Total	3	3	

In concluding, I would like to thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing always afforded me, and the interest taken in my proposals.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE.

May 29th, 1939.